

Care Capsule[®]

*Capsules of motivation to dispense
care and kindness*

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Exotic Care

— Dr. James R. Kok

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The definition of the word exotic is “to be different in a way that is striking or fascinating.”

That fits prayer. The most exotic way to care for another person may be by praying for them. It can be done anonymously, at a distance, briefly, in great depth, or on the run.

There are many ways and forms of praying. There are formal prayers, which completely name everything including the missionaries in the foreign fields and the President in Washington D.C. There are prayers for meals, and there are silent or spoken prayers. It is the care-and-compassion-oriented prayers, those for the sick, lonely,

injured, and distressed, that I'd like to talk about.

There are scores of texts about prayers in the Bible. Only a few specifically talk about praying for the sick. Nevertheless, praying for the sick is a very basic part of Christian life. We hardly miss a day of remembering people who are hurting or sick or who we consider in unique or special need of prayer .



I do not consider myself a very prayerful person. I need to remind myself and work at it thoughtfully all the time. It is not natural to my disposition. Nevertheless, I have a handful of

remarkable prayer stories:

1. There is a 40-year-old man living in Northwest Washington state who was dying as a baby forty years ago. His father was my intern at Pine Rest Christian Hospital in Michigan

(continued on page 2)

and came to me the day he was born telling me the boy was going to die. That day many lifted him up to God in prayer. That evening I prayed personally and intensely for him in our bedroom. I stood facing in the direction of the hospital where he had been born and was dying. Standing there, I silently poured out my heart to God asking for the baby's healing. The next morning his father showed up again at my office. This time, to my surprise, there was a smile on his face. The little boy was going to live! Hundreds had prayed for him but I had a strange internal conviction that my prayer had made the difference.

2. Locally, I see a young man from time to time who is the father of three little children. About 10 years ago he and his wife came to me and asked me if I would sign a paper helping them to move into the adoption arena. They had exhausted every possibility to conceive. They were giving up and turning toward adoption. We talked for a while about their disappointment and I agreed to sign the paper, but I said, "Before you go, let's pray about having a baby the natural way." They agreed and I spoke a rather specific prayer of supplication. We signed the document and they parted. It was not long after that time together that they excitedly called telling me about her pregnancy. Today there are three naturally-born healthy children in that home. I'm sure it was my prayer that made the

difference.

I have more stories but I want to just tell you one more. It is about myself.

3. This also happened many years ago. I was a physically active young man playing a variety of sports, including a weekly racquetball duel with my younger brother. And I could not beat him two out of three. Since I was the family athlete, that frustrated me terribly. I started to work at it so intensely that I hurt my back. At first I sort of ignored the pain and allowed a week to go by for it to heal. Then I would get back on the racquetball court, lose two out of three, and wreck my back again. After a while my back was bothering me intensely all the time and it would not heal. I could not get back on the racquetball court. Weeks went by and I found that I was living with a nearly disabling back injury.

For some reason my wife, Linda, suggested we contact her friend Judy, who was a notorious prayer person. I did not have her in high regard but by this time I was so desperate I agreed to go to Judy's house for prayer on my back. Lo and behold!

After two or three weeks of Wednesday night sessions, lying on her living room floor with a handful of her friends putting their hands on my back while Judy prayed intensely, my back no longer hurt. And today, in 2014, I count about 40 years of having no back trouble at all.

I share these stories as a preface for talking about and encouraging personal prayer directed toward

God flows through us

life-changing, healing reversals of unwanted negative circumstances, illness and injury. Our world today is dazzling with technology and we are in daily awe over the discoveries and capacities of modern medicine. These incredible disciplines are gifts of God, helping us to thrive in our modern crowded world. But they have seduced us into thinking of ourselves as physical beings, without relevant spirituality. "Science will develop it," we trust. "Medical experts can solve it," we believe. Our peace of mind grows increasingly local as we trust our fellow human beings to solve our problems.

The past few decades have erased a lot of the mystery of life. Our helplessness, which originally motivated us to cry out to God for help has diminished. Prayer has almost seemed primitive to us modern, educated folk. The human species has more and more been regarded as animal-like, not a physical-spiritual creature.

Prayer, for many, has become a religious activity more than a way to help and heal each other, and oneself, as it channels God's

Prayer takes care and kindness to a different level

therapeutic healing love. Truly, prayer is a basic Christian activity, but it is mostly mysterious.

At the same time, it is important to realize that our own role is significant. God flows through us too! Here are some interesting findings that demonstrate that.

Professional people have done research on prayer. One of the surprising projects was prayer for seeds. They carefully placed seeds on trays with water on them. Some

were soaking in salt water, others in fresh. Then they would pray for these seeds to germinate and sprout. However, there were some soaking seeds that were not prayed for. After a certain span of time and active praying, they measured the results. The prayed-for seeds clearly germinated and sprouted more rapidly than those seeds that were not prayed for. A remarkable additional result was that the seeds in salt water, which was like making them sick, germinated even faster than those in clean fresh water.

How they prayed is also fascinating. They found that when they prayed for the seeds in a general way, that is for their well-being and their healthiness rather than for sprouting, the seeds sprouted even more quickly and more strongly than when they prayed that the seeds would germinate and sprout. In other words, when they were specific, there were positive results, but the results were even more positive when they took what we might call a “thy will be done” approach.

One more example: in a medical center in San Francisco a few years ago, a prayer experiment was set up. The patients were all seriously ill patients in a large medical center for cardiac care. The patient group was divided in half. Half of them were going to be given medical care and prayed for, and the other half would be left to the usual treatment system only. The people doing the praying were in

There were significant positive effects

small groups all over the United States. After a designated period of time, the research experts went back and checked all the patients. This is what they found: there were significant positive effects — less medicine required, healing, and improvement — among those who had been prayed for, compared to the others. No patients, and none of the nurses, doctors and other

the results continue to be positive.

Prayer for others is a clear, powerful way of showing compassion. It is loving-kindness on a high spiritual level that anyone can do. It can happen anywhere, any time. As we put a person in our mind’s eye; as we think of them and mentally look at them; as we speak loving words of prayer for their well-being, God/Jesus’ healing presence flows forth from us into them.

Healing happens, sometimes in strikingly visible ways.

This is almost too much to believe. We are on the front lines, not just crying for help. The love of Jesus is in us, and we can send it, give it, channel it to others for their well-being.

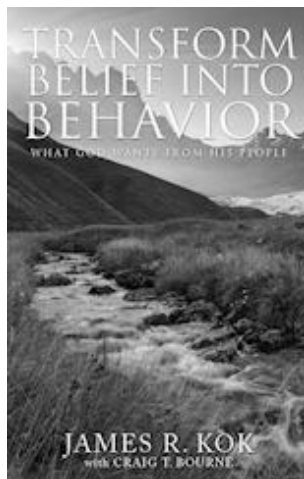
Prayer takes care and kindness to a different level. It is more like work can often be. It requires a decision to do something relatively heavy, difficult and to concentrate. It’s a focus on thoughtfully articulating our hopes and needs. The personal payoff is not pleasure and good feelings in the joyful sense, but it may turn to joy and thanksgiving. At first, though, it is just work.

So prayer is compassion on a different plane than everyday care and kindness can be. There we harvest a lot of pleasure. With prayer, the reward is the gratification of doing good, of loving kindness on a major level. Gratification feeds our hearts and souls more lastingly than pleasure.

But more than that — “prayer changes things.”

Just Released !

Jim Kok’s newest book, **Transform Belief Into Behavior**, was publicly released on February 17. It is now available in bookstores and on Amazon.com



If you would like an autographed copy, you can order it from Care and Kindness Ministries, 10073 Valley View St, #429, Cypress, CA 90630, for \$16.00

aides, knew the research was going on, or who was or was not being prayed for.

These research projects have now been duplicated in other places and



A GREAT LESSON ON STRESS

A young lady confidently walked around the room with a raised glass of water while leading a seminar and explaining stress management to her audience. Everyone knew she was going to ask the ultimate question, 'Half empty or half full?'

She fooled them all. *"How heavy is this glass of water?"* she inquired with a smile. Answers called out ranged from 8 oz. To 20 oz.

She replied, *"The absolute weight doesn't matter. It depends on how long I hold it. If I hold it for a minute, that's not a problem. If I hold it for an hour, I'll have an ache in my right arm."*

"If I hold it for a day, you'll have to call an ambulance. In each case it's the same weight, but the longer I hold it, the heavier it becomes."

She continued, *"And that's the way it is with stress. If we carry our burdens all the time, sooner or later, as the burden becomes increasingly heavy, we won't be able to carry on."*

"As with the glass of water, you have to put it down for a while and rest before holding it again. When we're refreshed, we can carry on with the burden - holding stress longer and better each time practiced."

So, as early in the evening as you can, put all your burdens down. Don't carry them through the evening and into the night. Pick them up again tomorrow if you must.

1. Accept the fact that some days you're the pigeon, and some days you're the statue!
2. Always keep your words soft and sweet, just in case you have to eat them.
3. Always read stuff that will make you look good if you die in the middle of it.
4. Drive carefully ... It's not only cars that can be recalled by their Maker.
5. If you can't be kind, at least have the decency to be vague.

6. If you lend someone \$20 and never see that person again, it was probably worth it.
7. It may be that your sole purpose in life is simply to serve as a warning to others.
8. Never buy a car you can't push.
9. Never put both feet in your mouth at the same time, because then you won't have a leg to stand on.
10. Nobody cares if you can't dance well. Just get up and dance.
11. Since it's the early worm that gets eaten by the bird, sleep late.
12. The second mouse gets the cheese.
13. When everything's coming your way, you're in the wrong lane.



14. Birthdays are good for you. The more you have, the longer you live.

15. Some mistakes are too much fun to make only once.

16. We could learn a lot from crayons. Some are sharp, some are pretty and some are

dull. Some have weird names and all are different colors, but they all have to live in the same box.

17. A truly happy person is one who can enjoy the scenery on a detour.

18. Have an awesome day and know that someone has thought about you today.

AND MOST IMPORTANTLY . . .

19. Save the earth . . . It's the only planet with chocolate!

Worrying has no effect on tomorrow, but worrying can sure ruin today.

Delightful conference in Mission Viejo was an outstanding success

*The two-day event at the **Presbyterian Church of the Master** on February 7 and 8 was filled with joyful people, each of whom was seeking to become better equipped to show love and care to the people they meet each day and to spread intentional acts of kindness.*



What to Say (or not) About Grief

Approximately June 14, the Long Beach Press Telegram had a front page story marking the six-month anniversary of the Sandy Hook Elementary School tragedy in Connecticut. So far, so good. But the paraphrased headline (*I don't remember it exactly, nothing I say here is verbatim*) proclaimed "SIX MONTHS LATER, SCARS STILL REMAIN"

Excuse me!? The story (*probably written by a very young and idealistic journalist who has never survived a tragedy*) began something like this: "Although it has been six months since the tragic shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary School, parents are still struggling with the loss."

Ya think!?

I read this on a Sunday morning and immediately folded up the paper thinking, "I gotta share this with my SOS (Survivors of Suicide) group."

I held it up before them and read the headline and asked for opinions. Everyone present (not just the parents present) expressed disbelief at this article. Several pointed out what I had first thought – Scars? Don't scars take a long, long time to appear? Wouldn't this be more a gaping, bleeding wound?

We all agreed that if this story had been run at, say, a ten-year anniversary, it would make more sense. Anyway, it served as a real eye opener to remind us just how little some people understand the grieving process. And how lucky they are (so far) that they don't.

— Jeri Livingstone

*Jim Kok's book, **The Miracle of Kindness**, has some helpful guidance on this subject. For example, in Chapter 6, he writes, "Here is a supposedly comforting sentence that is commonly given: 'Try to remember she is with the Lord.'*

"For the grieving parent, of course, there is comfort in this important truth. It is a powerfully vital hope, but saying this does little to lessen the terrible pain of their child's death. Certainly their outlook is affected by Easter hope, but there is virtually no softening of their devastating loss by reminders of the child's ongoing life in Jesus' presence."

There are more chapters that touch on helpful ways to address another's grief and loss.

If you do not yet have a copy of this practical guidebook to care and kindness, go to www.miracleofkindness.com

More Conferences

February 21 – 22, 2014 Des Moines, Iowa

Westminster Presbyterian Church, located in Des Moines, Iowa, is hosting our next regional conference in February at the same time that this issue of the **Care Capsule** goes to press.

We will include information from it in our next issue.

Conference website: www.careandkindness.org/DesMoines/indexDM.php

March 21 – 22, 2014 Bellflower, California

Bethany Christian Reformed Church is located conveniently near the intersection of two major freeways near the Los Angeles / Orange county border.

This means you can combine your trip with lots of area attractions in both Los Angeles and Orange counties that can be easily reached.

Conference website: www.careandkindness.org/Bellflower/indexBell.php

May 2 – 3, 2014 Pompton Plains, New Jersey

First Reformed Church of Pompton Plains is located 26 miles northwest of Manhattan. The church dates back to 1736 and you can discover Revolutionary War history in the area. Combine your trip with Broadway plays, along with all that New York City has to offer, as well as beach resorts.

Conference website: www.careandkindness.org/NewJersey14/indexNK.php



Light Notes

My Frustrations !#&@

My wife and I had words, but I didn't get to use mine.

~~~~~

Frustration is trying to find your glasses without your glasses.

~~~~~

The irony of life is that, by the time you're old enough to know your way around, you're not going anywhere.

~~~~~

God made man before woman so as to give him time to think of an answer for her first question.

~~~~~

Every morning is the dawn of a new error.

~~~~~

I used to be indecisive. Now I'm not so sure.

~~~~~

I'm supposed to respect my elders, but its getting harder and harder for me to find one now.

~~~~~

Broken pencils are pointless.

~~~~~

Velcro - what a rip off!

~~~~~

I didn't like my beard at first. Then it grew on me.

~~~~~

Why is it that no plastic bag will open from the end on my first try?

Thoughts from Jim

Dr. Jim Kok maintained a blog named **Kok's Korner** on the Crystal Cathedral website until his retirement at the end of June 2013.

He has now moved his comments to the Care and Kindness website, www.careandkindness.org, where they are archived as **Thoughts from Jim**. The most recent posting is displayed on the Home Page, but the menu link above it takes you to the archives, so that you can go back to read earlier ones you may have not yet read.
www.careandkindness.org/ThoughtsIndex.htm

You can have his blogs emailed automatically to you once a week by sending a request to ShowUp@careandkindness.org

Partnering for a Care Conference in your area !

We would like to work with your team to schedule a local mini-conference that would make it easy for people in your geographic area to attend.

We are working with churches in various parts of the United States to present weekend conferences.

How would you like to help host one in your community?



We will offer as much help as you would like, drawing upon our past experience. You can determine the topics, speakers, schedule any way you want — or we can provide someone to work alongside your people in developing those things.

Drop us a line at:

ShowUp@careandkindness.org to let us know of your interest. Then we can begin planning together!



***Love is when mommy sees daddy
smelly and sweaty and still says he is
handsomer than Robert Redford.***

Chris- age 7



Josh's Ideas

Josh was sitting on my lap as I read him a bedtime story. From time to time, Josh would take his eyes off the book and reach up to touch my wrinkled cheek. He was alternately stroking his own cheek, then mine again. Finally he spoke up, *"Grandpa, did God make you?"*

"Yes," I answered, "God made me a long time ago."

"Oh," he paused, "Grandpa, did God make me too?"

"Yes, indeed," I said, "God made you just a little while ago."

Feeling our respective faces again, he observed, *"God's getting better at it, isn't he?"*

A father was at the beach with his children when his four-year-old son ran up to him, grabbed his hand, and led him to the shore, where a seagull lay dead in the sand.

"Daddy, what happened to him?" the son asked.

"He died and went to Heaven," the dad replied.

The boy thought a moment and then said, *"Did God throw him back down?"*

Care Capsule

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